
Biology, Health and Medical Practice

James Krueger^{*†1}

¹University of Redlands – United States

Abstract

Theoretical accounts of disease generally attempt to ground the concept in the relevant underlying biological facts. Discussions of such accounts have largely focused on whether they successfully identify necessary and sufficient conditions for a state to count as pathological. Correctly accounting for examples of pathology, however, is not the only basis for evaluating an understanding of disease. Here, I argue that we should expect any understanding of health and disease to be consistent with important aspects of medical practice. Specifically, any such understanding should be consistent with the ways that we attempt to treat, cure, and prevent disease. What we do when we treat, for example, must be intelligible in terms of reducing or eliminating pathology and promoting health. If it is not, it is hard to understand what it is that an account of health and disease provides for us. Such an account runs the risk of become an empty abstraction of little relevance to what medicine is or does. In making this case, I argue that the theoretical account of health offered by Christopher Boorse should be rejected because of its failings in this regard. This conclusion highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between biology and the biomedical sciences than what is implied by such understandings of disease.

*Speaker

†Corresponding author: james.krueger@redlands.edu